

**Opening Remarks of Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Jonathan Greenert
before the Senate Armed Services Committee Hearing
on the fiscal year 2016 Dept. of the Navy Posture**

March 10, 2015

Chairman McCain, ranking member Reed, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

It's my honor to serve and represent more than 600,000 active and reserve Sailors, civilians, and their families, especially the 41,000 Sailors who are underway and deployed around the world today.

It is my pleasure to testify this morning beside Secretary Mabus and General Dunford. Chairman your Navy-Marine Corps team is united in fulfilling our longstanding mandate – to be where it matters, when it matters – ready to respond to crises.

Now to that point, recent events exemplify the value of forward presence. Last August, the Bush Carrier Strike Group relocated from the Arabian Sea to the Arabian Gulf, it's about 750 miles, in less than 30 hours, immediately flew 20-30 combat sorties per day. And for 54 days; that was the only coalition strike option to project power against ISIS. The destroyer Truxtun arrived in the Black Sea within a week after Russia invaded Crimea. And the littoral combat ship Fort Worth and the destroyer Sampson were among the first to support the search effort for Air Asia flight 8501 in the Java Sea.

So, we have been where it matters, when it matters.

But Mr. Chairman, as I have testified before, the continuing resolution and the sequestration of 2013 degraded our readiness and our capabilities. And we have not yet recovered.

Budget reductions have forced reduction of afloat and ashore operations, generated maintenance backlogs, and have compelled us to extend unit deployments. Since 2013, many of our ships have been on deployment for 8 to 10 months or longer, and that exacts a cost on the resiliency of our people and service lives of our ships.

Now this degraded readiness posture has reduced our ability to respond to contingencies. For example, our combatant commanders require that three carrier strike groups and three amphibious ready groups be ready to respond within 30 days to a crisis. That's our covenant to them. However, today, on average, we have been able to keep one carrier strike group and one amphibious ready group in this readiness posture – so we are at 1/3 of the requirement. Now assuming the best case of an on-time, adequate, and stable budget and no major contingencies, we might be able to recover from accumulated backlogs by 2018 for carrier strike groups, and 2020 for amphibious ready groups – so that's five years after this first round of sequestration. And that is just a glimpse of the damage sequestration would cause if we go back there.

We've been forced to slow Navy modernization. The overall impact of the budget shortfalls in the last three years has declined our relative warfighting advantages in several areas – notably anti-surface warfare, anti-submarine warfare, air-to-air warfare, and what we call integrated air and missile defense. So, we have been compelled to accept significant risk in the execution of two key missions that are specified in the defense strategy. I provided each of you a handout that summarizes where the Navy stands with their missions, and where we stand in relation to those missions under the two budgets: the president's budget and sequestration.

The first mission at risk is deter and defeat aggression, which really means to win a war at sea while deterring another at sea in a different theater. The second mission at risk is to project power despite anti-access/area denial challenges.

When I say "risk," I mean that some of our platforms, our people, and our systems will arrive late to the fight. They will arrive with insufficient ordnance; and be without modern combat systems, sensors and networks that are required; and they will be inadequately prepared to fight.

Now ultimately this means more ships and aircrafts out of action in battle, more Sailors, Marines, and Merchant Mariners killed, and less credibility – frankly – to deter adversaries and to assure allies in the future.

Given these circumstances, our Presidential Budget 2016 submission represents the absolute minimum funding levels needed to execute our strategic guidance.

To bring the Navy program into balance within that fiscal guidance, we focused first on building appropriate capability, and then deliver that capability at whatever capacity we could afford.

We were once again compelled to defer upgrades in aircrafts and submarines, and take significant reductions in aircraft procurement, munitions, and shore infrastructure.

So, Mr. Chairman, today's world is more complex, more uncertain, and more turbulent. Our adversaries' are modernizing and expanding their capabilities. It's vital that we have an adequate, predictable, and timely budget to remain an effective Navy.

I thank you and I thank this committee for what they have done for us. I look forward to working with the Congress to find solutions that will ensure our Navy retains the ability to organize, train, and equip our great sailors, and their families, in defense of this nation. Thank you.

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